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Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 128: Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/56/34 and Corr.1)

Follow-up on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/56/356 and A/56/135)

1. **Mr. Kuyama** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/56/34 and Corr.1), noted that the Committee also had before it, under the agenda item, the Unit's work programme for 2001 and the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond (A/56/84), the Unit's report on experience with the follow-up system on Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations (A/56/356) and the Secretary-General's report on the same topic (A/56/135).

2. With regard to the Unit's programme of work, he recalled that in its resolutions 50/233 of 7 June 1996 and 54/16 of 29 October 1999 the General Assembly had invited the Unit to give priority, while preparing its annual programme of work, to the reports requested by the participating organizations. The Unit had endeavoured to do so over the past few years. It had thus submitted for action by the appropriate organs comprehensive reviews of management and administration in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A similar exercise had recently been completed for the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and one dealing with the World Health Organization (WHO) was shortly to be completed. The 2002 programme of work included a similar review for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

3. The Unit had developed a set of yardsticks to expedite the preparation of its reports so that they could be issued well in advance of the meetings of the legislative organs of participating organizations, which would thus be able to give them serious consideration in good time. He noted, however, that that goal had often been hindered, partly by reason of the failure of some participating organizations to provide the Unit with information and comments that it had requested.

4. The programme of work for 2001 included 14 new reports and one note; one of the reports, entitled "Comprehensive review of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor", had recently been added. In addition, the Unit had carried over nine reports and two notes from its previous programmes of work, giving a total of 23 reports and three notes currently under preparation or already completed. The Unit would be grateful for comments from Member States on the programme of work and the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond. It would also appreciate receiving any specific requests for consideration.

5. In its annual report (A/54/34 and Corr.1), the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) indicated that when it had drawn up its budget proposals for the biennium 2002-2003 it had adopted a new approach aimed at improving its research capacity, and had decided to devote part of the resources intended for Professional posts to the funding of short-term expert services. That arrangement should allow it to widen its capacity while allowing for more flexibility. To that end, the Unit had requested: (a) the elimination of two P-2 posts; (b) the creation of an additional P-4 post; and (c) an amount of $60,000 to fund the services of individual contractors and recruit temporary staff. The extra expenditure required under (b) and (c) would be more than offset by the elimination of the two P-2 posts. It was not a question of running counter to the Organization's principle of rejuvenating staff, but rather of improving the productivity of the Unit, which did not have sufficient resources for the in-house training that was nonetheless indispensable if young staff were to become fully productive. Another problem facing the Unit was General Service staffing: the proportion of General Service to Inspector and Professional level posts was 43 per cent in the JIU secretariat, while it was 58 per cent in the United Nations Secretariat overall. The situation was still more critical for secretarial posts. Of the three currently budgeted, two were fully devoted to the preparation of JIU reports and just one person performed secretarial services for the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the nine other inspectors, the Executive Secretary and nine Professional staff. The Unit had proposed to redress that situation partially by creating two additional secretarial posts (General Service, other levels). In any event, the total amount requested for the biennium 2002-2003, at $7,334,400, remained the same as the appropriation for the biennium 2000-2001. The

increase proposed for posts ($19,900) was fully offset by a decrease of the same amount in other items. In its report (A/56/7, para. X.12), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) interposed no objection to the proposals made by JIU. In its resolution 55/230 of 23 December 2000, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to submit a report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the budget proposals made by JIU as required by the Unit's statute. While a succinct report of ACC had been submitted, the Unit's proposals had not been attached, and the policy-making bodies had therefore been unable to have a complete picture of the Unit's budget proposals, although that had ostensibly been the aim sought by the General Assembly.

6. The inspectors had strengthened their relations with the Member States and legislative organs during the period covered by the report, particularly in respect of the handling by a number of participating organizations of the Unit's reports (establishment of a follow-up system for its recommendations). In addition, the Unit had held a series of informal meetings with the Member States represented in Geneva so as to exchange views on a number of questions, including its programme of work. It had also continued its efforts to improve interactions with participating organizations, holding extensive discussions on the handling of its reports and the establishment of a follow-up system for its recommendations with the secretariats of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The General Assembly had invited the Unit to continue to develop interaction with other United Nations oversight bodies and to intensify relations with the oversight bodies of other participating organizations with a view to achieving better coordination and sharing best practices. Not only had the Unit taken part in the annual Tripartite Oversight Coordination meeting which included the United Nations Board of Auditors, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and JIU; in order to develop cooperation among all the United Nations internal and external oversight bodies, it had also recently proposed to hold a joint meeting with the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations at its next meeting in Geneva, to be held at the end of November.

7. With reference to the special report on the follow-up system for JIU reports and recommendations (A/56/356), he said that the major obstacle to the implementation of the follow-up system had been the lack of specific legislative action on JIU recommendations. In particular, legislative organs often contented themselves with "taking note" of the conclusions and recommendations of the reports, without clearly indicating whether or not they were "approved". Unless approval was clearly expressed by legislative organs, practically no effective follow-up was possible, because (a) under article 12 of the JIU statute, which constituted the basis for implementation of its recommendations, it was generally understood that "recommendations ... approved by ... competent organs" referred only to those approved through legislative action and not to those addressed to and accepted by executive heads without legislative action; and (b) an action to "take note", irrespective of the interpretation of that phrase, did not legally bind the secretariats to ensure effective implementation or follow-up. In a letter addressed in April 2001 to all participating organizations, JIU had asked them to provide the information requested by the General Assembly concerning approved recommendations that had not been implemented. Several respondents had indicated that there were no approved recommendations that had not been implemented, while others had noted that they could not report on implementation in the absence of a clearly agreed follow-up system. It was thus important for the legislative organs to avoid vague expressions such as "takes note" and to take specific action (approval) regarding JIU recommendations. For that purpose, when submitting JIU reports to the legislative organs with their comments, the secretariats should clearly indicate which of the recommendations, in their opinion, required specific legislative action and which could be implemented by the executive heads without legislative action. That did not, however, prevent legislative organs, if they so wished, from reviewing recommendations addressed to the executive heads and the comments thereon. Under the various

understandings reached or envisaged with participating organizations regarding follow-up of JIU reports and recommendations, it was expected that the phrase "recommendations ... approved by ... competent organs" would be clarified and that the ambiguous term "takes note" would no longer be used. That would allow JIU to report with greater ease and accuracy on the implementation or non-implementation of its reports and recommendations. In chapter II of its report in document A/56/356, JIU provided information on the situation in those organizations which had acted formally on the follow-up system, and in chapter III it suggested a draft resolution on that system for adoption by the General Assembly.

8. In conclusion, he recalled that in its resolution 50/233 the General Assembly had stressed that the impact of the Unit on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system was the shared responsibility of Member States, the Unit and the secretariats of the participating organizations. The support and guidance of Member States were the key to the success of the Unit's work.

9. **Ms. Ferrena-Mahmud** (Chief, Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/56/135), recalled that the report responded to specific and reiterated requests from the General Assembly, made in particular in its resolutions 2924 B (XXVII) of 24 November 1972 and 44/184 of 19 December 1989 and in its decision 50/470 of 23 December 1995. The current form of the Secretary-General's report on the question dated back to the fiftieth session of the Assembly, since JIU had specified that all its recommendations, once approved by the General Assembly, should be followed up, and that principle had been approved by the Assembly in its resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996. The Secretary-General's report described the implementation of recommendations put forward by the Unit in six of its reports, relating to common services at United Nations Headquarters, outsourcing as a means for achieving improved cost-effectiveness in United Nations bodies, the United Nations University, review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery, evaluation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and results-based budgeting. Those reports had been selected because they were of special interest to Member States, as demonstrated by the recent debates in the General Assembly and particularly in the Fifth Committee. Representatives of the relevant units of the Secretariat were available to answer any questions from delegations.

Management of buildings (A/56/274 and Add.1)

10. **Mr. Mezzalama** (Joint Inspection Unit) introduced the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Management of buildings: practices of selected United Nations system organizations relevant to the renovation of the United Nations Headquarters" (A/56/274) which the Secretary-General had commented on in document A/56/247/Add.1.

11. The problem of building maintenance was not a new one for United Nations agencies, but the situation concerning Headquarters was particularly serious and deserved urgent attention. It had been postponed too many times, despite warnings by the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit that the situation was becoming critical. Some of the reasons for that inaction were common to a number of agencies JIU had questioned. Building maintenance was not a fashionable issue and there was a tendency to avoid timely consideration — particularly in times of financial constraint, when other issues often took priority. That was a mistake.

12. JIU had repeatedly warned, to no avail, that such neglect was dangerous and would, in the long run, entail higher costs. The objectives of the present report, which fell within the context of the capital master plan, were: (a) to examine the operational and financial issues pertaining to the renovation of the United Nations Headquarters buildings, in the light of the management practices of some of the organizations of the system and (b) to assist Member States and the Secretariat in considering measures aimed at both timely and systematic maintenance and capital improvements. A distinction must be made between normal maintenance, on the one hand, and major renovation modernization projects, on the other, for the latter had very different financial implications. Payments for current maintenance were made through the regular budget and, occasionally, through special account arrangements; by contrast, capital expenditure required an institutionalized financial framework which did not fall within the regular budget. The capital master plan fell in that second category.

13. The JIU report centred on the issue of management of the United Nations Headquarters buildings. It also looked at the headquarters of selected other United Nations system organizations but without making an exhaustive study of them; it was intended purely for purposes of comparison and to see whether there were any lessons to be learned. One possible example might be the policy followed by the Swiss Government via the Foundation pour les Immeubles des Organizations Internationales; another might be the case of UNESCO, whose headquarters, in Paris, posed problems similar to those posed by Headquarters in New York; that case was interesting in terms of the attitude adopted by the host country.

14. Some of the recommendations were of fundamental importance. Firstly, it was necessary to draw up, as a matter of urgency, a building management policy in the context of the capital master plan, which would make a distinction between normal and special maintenance costs. For the latter, it would be necessary to establish, as envisaged in recommendations 1 to 5, a building/real estate fund for the purpose of covering the costs of major projects. Of course one might ask whether it was a good idea to set up a special account outside the budget which would then not be subject to budgetary discipline; that had not stopped several specialized agencies from opting for that formula and getting good results. The Secretary-General had been right to raise the question; precautions would have to be taken, but it could be a satisfactory solution.

15. The second recommendation dealt with the need to ensure full compliance with existing building codes. Members of the Committee had repeatedly criticized security and the quality of the work environment. Of course, it was necessary to respect strictly the principle of the inviolability of premises. Thirdly, judicious and rational use of office space, was an integral part of a good building management policy. JIU had already tackled that issue and it did so again in recommendations 6,7 and 8. He noted with satisfaction that it was apparent from paragraph 5 (b) of the Secretary-General's comments that the Secretary-General was aware of the problem and seemed to be prepared to take active steps to improve the situation.

16. Fourthly, the host country had an essential role to play where special work was needed and there were some striking examples to be found in the report with regard to United Nations agencies. Several funding formulae were envisaged in the capital master plan and their respective advantages and disadvantages were analysed; that should help Member States to make their choice, particularly once the points raised by the Advisory Committee had been clarified. In any event, the Government of the host country and the State and city governments would have an important role to play and they would have to be invited to participate actively in the funding and in the implementation of the capital master plan (recommendation 3).

17. In document A/56/274/Add.1 the Secretary-General agreed, on the whole, with most of the recommendations and provided some additional information to complete the analysis of certain problems. His criticism in paragraph 8, however, called for some explanation. Of course it would have been good to propose a general principle and to suggest standards, but for the reasons given in paragraph 21 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, it would have been extremely difficult to do so. The only information that had emerged from that series of meetings, namely the views of the buildings industry, could obviously not be applied to buildings such as the Headquarters in New York, which had a historical value. Moreover, the diversity of headquarters visited showed that it was not possible to identify any universal principles. The level of resources needed for building maintenance could only be determined on a case-by-case basis. It went without saying that newer, well-maintained buildings, such as could be found in Geneva and elsewhere, were a very different matter from older buildings — such as the United Nations in New York — which were of historical value but which were falling apart.

18. **Mr. Toh** (Director of the Facilities Management Division of the Office of Central Support Services), introducing a note by the Secretary-General (A/56/274/Add.1), said that the maintenance of buildings was not a question of aesthetics but of security. Member States had testified to the importance they attached to staff security at Headquarters when the Committee had approved allocations for the preparation of a draft outline of the capital master plan. In order to ensure the proper maintenance of buildings, it was essential not only for the necessary funding to be available, but for it to be available as and when required. A rigid biennial funding system was therefore not appropriate, since a well-conceived maintenance plan must not only cater for emergencies, but must also envisage work over the long-term, with a time-frame

that could extend well beyond two to four years. The Secretary-General accordingly endorsed the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation on the subject.

Common services (A/55/856 and Add.1; A/56/7 (chap. I, sect. E 14) and A/56/417)

19. **Mr. Kuyama** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) introduced the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the United Nations system common services at Geneva (A/56/856). He was gratified to note the growing importance attached to the question of common services and said he was convinced that such a modality of cooperation between United Nations organizations represented a sure means of achieving the goals of greater productivity and cost-savings common to the entire system. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had produced several reports on that subject since 1984. He noted with satisfaction that Headquarters — and, increasingly also field duty stations — were making visible progress in the utilization of common services, thanks, in particular, to the reform programme of the Secretary-General, who had rightly identified common services as an instrument for trimming administrative expenditures for the benefit of the substantive work of the Organization.

20. The report (A/55/856) provided follow-up to a report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "United Nations system common services at Geneva, part I, Overview of administrative cooperation and coordination" (A/53/787) that had been endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 54/255 of 7 April 2000. The report contained case studies of five common services shared by virtually all the Geneva-based United Nations organizations. It provided guidelines both for improving the management of such services (electronic networking of participating organizations, agreed service quality and efficiency standards, cost-allocation formulae, and accountability to service users) and for implementing the aforementioned resolution.

21. He welcomed the measures implemented at Geneva to strengthen common services, including the establishment, in February 2001, of an inter-agency Management Ownership Committee composed of the executive heads of the specialized agencies at Geneva, under the chairmanship of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and assisted by a Task Force on common services. It was regrettable, however, that Geneva was still lagging behind Headquarters, Vienna and other field duty stations, especially given the advantage of pooling such costly support services as translation, interpretation, printing, the publication of documents, and many administrative functions. The Geneva agencies seemed to resist the concept of sharing services, as evidenced by the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) contained in document A/55/856/Add.1.

22. With regard to recommendation 1 of JIU regarding the strengthening of the International Computing Centre (ICC), ACC did not subscribe to most of the measures proposed on the grounds that each organization was unique. Rather than utilizing the full potential of ICC to reduce the cost of their information technology services, participating institutions out sourced such services or performed them internally. Some used the Centre's services while barely contributing to its budget, while others had given notice of their withdrawal.

23. It was to be regretted that management information systems, technologies and services, which represented an increasingly heavy burden on the Organization's overall budget, also appeared to be an area in which it was difficult to achieve cooperation, as illustrated by the recent dissolution of the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC). However, without coordination and cooperative structures such as ICC, there was a risk not only that programme support expenditures might spin out of control in the years ahead, but also that the performance of certain administrative support functions that were dependent on information technology systems might be undermined. Proper management of common services was impossible at major duty stations unless the information technology systems of the participating agencies were compatible.

24. Recommendation 2 concerned the Joint Medical Service (JMS). It was a matter of concern that the very existence of the service was threatened, even though it was widely utilized by the Geneva organizations. Some organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had established their own medical services; according to ACC, the World Health Organization (WHO), which administered JMS on behalf of the other participating organizations, advocated a federal approach with only health promotion and related tasks being centralized.

However, such a "federation" would be more costly, since it would result in the duplication of health-care facilities, personnel and supplies, and would result in the disintegration of JMS into several autonomous services; that would be contrary to the approach adopted at other duty stations, and would detract from the standardization of the delivery of services provided by JMS. Moreover, the diversity of health insurance policies created disparities in coverage and entitlement. The first step would be to harmonize insurance policies in order to ensure equality of treatment for all staff members, and conformity with the personal standards of the common system, and a single insurance policy should then be established, as was the case in New York. The arguments put forward by ACC, which in fact represented the minority view of WHO, seemed indefensible, since there was no reason why a medical insurance arrangement suitable for all organizations — whatever their structure and the geographical deployment of their staff — could not be applied at Geneva, as was the case in New York.

25. Recommendation 3 of the Joint Inspection Unit, on training activities, was designed to strengthen existing cooperation among Geneva-based organizations in that area. The Secretary-General had taken note of recommendation 4, relating to the Diplomatic Pouch Service, which was operating very successfully. With regard to recommendation 5, on the Joint Purchase Service, almost all the proposed measures were currently being implemented within the framework of the Management Ownership Committee.

26. He emphasized that the five services reviewed in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit were not the only services shared at the Geneva duty station; the Division of Administration and the Division of Conference Services within the United Nations Office at Geneva were essentially common services supporting most of the Geneva-based United Nations bodies and, to a lesser extent, the specialized agencies. Recommendation 6 of the Joint Inspection Unit was aimed at strengthening those services with adequate means and efficiency reforms so that they could promote the implementation of General Assembly resolution A/54/255, as well as the 10-year programme of action on Geneva common services which the Joint Inspection Unit had recommended for adoption. In response to the objection raised by ACC in paragraph 27 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/55/856/Add.1), there was no contradiction between the expansion of common services and the further decentralization of management. Indeed, what would be delegated to programme managers was decision-making authority and management accountability, rather than routine operational tasks; that distinction had been highlighted by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report entitled "Delegation of authority for management of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat" (A/55/857, paras. 32 and 33), which the General Assembly had endorsed in 2000.

27. With the establishment of the Management Ownership Committee, administrative cooperation among the Geneva-based organizations had made a good start. The work of that Committee and of its subsidiary bodies should be encouraged and the results achieved should be periodically assessed for their measurable impact on the administrative support budgets of the organizations concerned. Mindful of the provisions of its statute and the expectations of the Member States, the Joint Inspection Unit was ready to contribute to the enhancement of the common services at all duty stations, and he emphasized that such services should be systematically monitored by the oversight bodies, particularly the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). Lastly, he said that, of all the duty stations, Geneva was a prime candidate for efficiency and cost-saving reforms through the use of common services.

28. **Mr. Gabriel** (Administrative Committee on Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on common services at Geneva (A/56/417), which had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 54/255, outlined its contents, as well as the comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (A/55/856/Add.1) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination had participated in the preparation of both documents.

Services of private management consulting firms (A/54/702 and A/55/979)

29. **Mr. Bouayad-Agha** (Joint Inspection Unit) introduced document A/54/702, which dealt essentially with the use of the services of private management consulting firms by the organizations of the United Nations system and which reflected the views communicated to the Joint Inspection Unit by the heads

of those organizations. The conclusions in the report were therefore based on elements provided by the latter. The Joint Inspection Unit considered that the report could facilitate coordination between the organizations when they required external services. With regard to the comment made by the Secretary-General (A/55/979), that the measures proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit had already been incorporated into normal practice, JIU wished to point out that 18 months had elapsed between the publication of its report and the publication of that of the Secretary-General. It appeared that those concerned had taken advantage of the delay to improve their use of the services of private management consulting firms in order to reduce costs, and the Joint Inspect Unit was delighted that the Secretariat had been able to benefit from it.

30. The use of external expertise was inevitable and, in particular, the issue of management consulting firms, should be examined thoroughly as such firms would be called upon to play a very important role. Indeed, they had developed very rapidly, extending their sphere of activities from private companies to Governments, and then to international organizations. The World Bank had led the way by using the five largest firms in that area. The United Nations had been working with one of them since 1988, and the specialized agencies had followed that lead. Other management consulting firms were working with the United Nations system, but none of them were from developing countries.

31. Although such firms said that they adapted their services to the needs of each client, there was a high risk of standardization and, in that regard, recommendation 1 of the Joint Inspection Unit advocated the establishment of rules immediately, even though the use of the services of such firms was still very limited. He also called attention to recommendations 2, 5, 6 and 7.

32. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would be informed of the comments of the Advisory Committee on common services at Geneva by its Chairman during consideration of the programme-budget exercise for the biennium 2002-2003.

33. **Mr. Gabriel** (Administrative Committee on Coordination) introduced document A/55/979, which brought together information provided by the relevant organizations of the United Nations system. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) welcomed the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and agreed with the representative of JIU that a long time had elapsed between the issuance of the JIU report and that of the Secretary-General. Furthermore, with respect to the use of private management consulting firms, ACC would make constant efforts to take the JIU recommendations into account.

34. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Turkey, and, in addition, Norway, said that he regretted the late issuance of document A/56/356. He welcomed the establishment of a follow-up system for JIU recommendations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/16; however, it was unfortunate that the participating organizations seldom implemented those recommendations. He wished that the JIU recommendations were more specific. With respect to JIU reports in general, it would be useful to have information on the dialogue between JIU and the relevant organizations and he proposed that the latter's comments should be included in the body of reports.

35. The European Union hoped that the programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2001 and preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond (A/56/84) would fully respect the mandate of JIU in order to avoid any coordination problems with the other monitoring bodies.

36. He noted that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on policies and practices in the use of the services of private management consulting firms in the organizations of the United Nations system (A/54/702) was incomplete since JIU had not contacted the firms in question. Like the Secretary-General, he had reservations regarding some conclusions which appeared hasty or ill-founded. He took note of the recommendation calling for reliance on internal specialist bodies but warned of the additional costs that that might entail. He recommended that, rather than advertising for biddings in the press, it would be preferable to use the Internet, which was less expensive and could reach all consulting firms. He also encouraged institutions to inform each other of the results of evaluations of the services provided by private firms. He hoped to discuss with JIU the possibility of establishing a standardized cost-accounting system for all United Nations organs and

bodies delivering common services. Lastly, cost-effectiveness should take precedence over any other criterion in the choice of consulting firms.

37. Generally speaking, he endorsed the recommendations of JIU, the comments of the Secretary-General and ACC and the recommendations of the Consultative Committee on Common Services in Geneva. He would appreciate details on the Joint Medical Service and the Joint Purchase Service; cost reduction should not be achieved at the expense of quality of service.

38. He endorsed the recommendations of JIU and the comments of the Secretary-General on the management of buildings (A/56/274 and Add.1), particularly with respect to JIU recommendation 5, which he hoped would be implemented taking into account the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. He was pleased that the Organization had the skills needed to implement the capital master plan and stressed the importance of the JIU recommendations concerning it; he would address the budgetary aspects of the question under agenda item 123.

39. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that there was a need for a system to ensure a genuinely effective system for following up the implementation of JIU recommendations. Some of the recommendations had been implemented — and JIU and the Secretary-General were to be commended for that — but the cases in which the legislative organs of the organizations in question had taken specific measures were fewer than in the past.

40. Document A/56/356 had not been distributed until that very morning; paragraph 12 thereof stated that reports on the implementation of the recommendations of JIU did not provide systematic and detailed coverage of all recommendations, nor did they address all JIU reports of relevance to the United Nations. It would be interesting to have the views of the representative of the Secretary-General on that matter. Paragraph 12 also stated that, since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 54/16, no follow-up mechanism had been put in place with regard to specific requirements, such as expeditious implementation of approved/accepted recommendations and full and timely reporting. The representative of the Secretary-General should indicate any problems that might have been encountered in developing such a mechanism.

41. With regard to the comments of the Secretary-General on the use of the services of consulting firms (A/55/979), he stressed the need for regulations in that area. Paragraph 3 of the document stated that the United Nations system, following the example of the public and private sector, sought to reduce regulations. However, the two goals were not mutually exclusive since a minimum of regulation was preferable to no regulation at all. Neither was there any contradiction between the search to reduce costs and the search for quality; efforts must be made to strike a balance between those two objectives.

42. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on building management practices (A/56/274) was particularly topical at a time when the Secretary-General's capital master plan was to be considered. The Joint Inspection Unit was right to state that programme managers should be fully aware of the financial implications of decisions concerning maintenance work and the allocation of office space. If they had been aware in the past, there would have been no need now to face such enormous expenditure to repair the Headquarters building.

43. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation) said that his country attached great importance to the work of the Joint Inspection Unit, especially in the context of enhancing the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, a question which was very topical at a time when the Organization was pursuing management reform and adopting a system of accountability and responsibility. The Joint Inspection Unit was an integral part of the internal and external oversight system and his delegation had always advocated its strengthening. In that connection, it was important to coordinate the work of the Unit as much as possible with that of other essential organs of the United Nations, in particular CPC, ACABQ, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors. It was also important to define clearly the responsibilities and areas of competence of those organs so that their work did not overlap. His delegation therefore welcomed the links which had been established between the Joint Inspection Unit, OIOS and the Board of Auditors (A/56/34, paras. 25 to 27), and hoped that those bodies would continue to cooperate closely and would call for the participation of the other bodies mentioned.

44. The success of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit was demonstrated not only by the number of reports and notes which it had submitted to the General Assembly and to the legislative organs of United Nations organizations in 2000, but also by the quality of those reports. In particular, he mentioned the reports entitled "Young professionals in selected organizations of the United Nations system: recruitment, management and retention", "Review of management and administration in the Registry of the International Court of Justice", "Delegation of authority for management of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat" and "Strengthening the investigations function in the United Nations system organizations". In the view of his delegation, those reports were based on facts, contained clear recommendations and should lead to real results.

45. The United Nations now had to face colossal tasks requiring considerable human and material resources. United Nations peacekeeping operations gave rise to enormous expenditure and it was natural that Member States should ask for that expenditure to be accounted for. Unfortunately, there were still a number of errors and gaps in that area, and sometimes even abuses. The Joint Inspection Unit still had many possibilities for intervention and could help to improve the utilization of resources in peacekeeping operations.

46. While his delegation had in general a favourable view of the work done by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2000, it wished to emphasize that the Unit should include in its reports recommendations aimed at achieving real savings of resources, particularly following an analysis of current programmes. It was only through enhanced efficiency, combined with the elimination of unproductive support expenditure that the activities of the whole United Nations system could be made more productive in relation to the sums allocated. It was also important that the Unit's reports should be submitted to the General Assembly sufficiently in advance so that delegations in the Fifth Committee could have time to study them closely before a wide-ranging debate was held on the problems raised in those reports, instead of being circulated after the debate, as had occurred on several occasions.

47. **Mr. Fujii** (Japan) wondered whether it was too early to discuss the capital master plan since a detailed plan had not yet been proposed. The report of JIU on the question, while interesting, tended to give the impression that the decision to start implementing the capital master plan had already been taken; that was premature. For the time being, therefore, the Committee could only take note of the recommendations, without taking a decision one way or the other.

48. **Mr. Yussuf** (United Republic of Tanzania) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Joint Inspection Unit had long been criticized for producing reports that were too lengthy and difficult to be useful and that cost too much. It would be interesting to have at least an approximate idea of their cost price. In any event great progress had been made, even though the reports did not always offer an in-depth analysis of the problems; that could no doubt be explained. The most important question was that of the implementation of the Unit's recommendations. He believed that the main obstacle was the lack of decisions by the legislative organs on follow-up. If recommendations were to be implemented, they must first be approved. Naturally, if the reports were not sufficiently interesting, the legislative organs might be tempted not to take them into account. It was therefore important to analyse the problem in depth in order to ascertain what was lacking in the reports, in the knowledge that, although the General Assembly might have noted the need, no machinery had been established to guarantee that there would be any follow-up. It was a serious problem and it would be useful if the inspectors who were present could give their opinion as to the means of remedying it and at the same time reply to the question regarding the cost of one of their reports.

Agenda item 121: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Proposed regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of officials other than Secretariat officials and experts on mission and regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of the Secretary-General (A/56/437)

49. **Ms. Schmidt** (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management) introduced the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Proposed regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of officials other than Secretariat officials and experts on mission and regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of the Secretary-General" (A/56/437). In

paragraph 20 of the report which the Secretary-General had submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session (A/55/928), he had stated that he was expecting to receive comments from the group of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on the proposed regulations. The consultations had now been completed and paragraph 4 of the commentary on article 1 (a) of the draft text had been added to take the results of those consultations into account.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.